

January 7, 2005

Dear State Board Members:

Big Bay de Noc School District is a consolidated school district which encompasses four townships and approximately 500 square miles. Our present student count is 292 (K-12) thus transportation costs are inordinately high.

Forty-six percent of our student body qualifies for free/reduced meals and twenty-eight percent of the students are Native American.

In the past two years we have reduced our staff by 12 FTE employees. We are currently at 32 FTE employees, down from 44 FTE. We have nineteen teachers K-12, two teacher aides, one K-12 principal (who is a retired, sub-contracted employee), one finance director, two office staff, and a part-time Superintendent (who is also a retired, sub-contracted employee). In addition, we have one person in charge of both maintenance and transportation, one custodian, five part-time bus drivers and two cooks. As you can readily see, we have a bare bones operation, yet our staff is top notch and makes every attempt to meet the various mandates of the federal and state governments.

Our funding is grossly inadequate and has remained flat for the past three years. Coupled with our declining enrollment, this further limits our ability to meet the needs of our students.

This January our teachers' contract is to be negotiated. In addition to having no money, we expect large increases in insurance and retirement costs. We realize that the State is financially strapped; however, Proposal A is not doing the job. I am in agreement with the individual who said filling potholes will no longer suffice, we need to redesign the highway for school financing.

Most schools no longer have any built-in safe guards with regards to budget. When we receive an executive order cut, we would be forced into deficit spending or further reducing our limited program thus not meeting the federal and state mandates.

Should the state not be forthcoming with financial relief, many schools will be forced to close their doors.

Thank you for your consideration on behalf of our students and school district.

Terry D. Brooks,
Superintendent
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